

Remarks for the Honorable Doris O. Matsui
Floor Consideration of Labor HHS Programs – FY11 C.R.
Wednesday, February 16, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to the C.R put forward by my Republican colleagues, and specifically to Amendment 450 offered by Mr. Mack of Florida.

This amendment would eliminate funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

As Americans, we share a common belief that volunteerism and community service make our country stronger. But we cannot be a leader in the world if we are not leaders in our own communities.

And as we speak, tens of thousands of Americans are involved in service projects across the country through one of several AmeriCorps programs.

These volunteers are building houses, helping young people learn to read, collecting food and clothing, and much, much more.

Through programs such as Learn and Serve, VISTA, Teach for America, Experience Corps, Youth Build, Habitat for Humanity, City Year, and Jumpstart, volunteers are using evidence-based research to make a tremendous impact in their communities.

But federal funding for each one of these programs would be shut down if Amendment 450 were to be enacted.

In my district of Sacramento, California, home to the NCCC Pacific Region, 300 AmeriCorps NCCC volunteers would be sent home.

Although these volunteers have already committed to a year of service, and they have all already been deployed, this amendment would require the Corporation for National and Community Service to buy their plane tickets home.

That process alone would make this a deficient program and leave the federal government liable for the costs.

Mr. Speaker, Amendment 450 is ill-conceived.

We see an enormous return in our investments in our national service programs. For every volunteer we help to support... we recruit another 10 volunteers.

And for every dollar the federal government invests, the organizations are able to leverage a matching dollar through local and private funding.

Last year, California received \$29 million in federal funds, with AmeriCorps programs and their local partners providing \$29.1 million in local match for a total investment of \$58.1 million in AmeriCorps service throughout California.

As a result, California AmeriCorps programs leveraged the talent, time and energy of nearly 52,000 community volunteers, providing more than 359,000 hours of service with an estimated value of \$7.2 million.

Volunteers are people like Michael, a young AmeriCorps member who decided to join the Y Team Mental Health Program because he saw a need for services in the schools that the teachers could not necessarily provide.

While the teachers are focused on preparing the youth for academic success, many other factors that contribute to a child's success are often overlooked, such as their home life, peer relations, and mental health.

Michael recognizes that his service provides another set of hands to support a school that is understaffed and overworked.

Through Y Team, he is able to support youth with all the things they may face growing up in a city that struggles with high crime rates, gang activity, and poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the need to tighten our belts, but eliminating the national service programs that are helping those who need it most and act as a glue in our communities, is not the way to do it.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this harmful amendment and against this C.R.